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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000779

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MARR](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CLEANING HOUSE IN KATANGA

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (C) Summary: International and Congolese media have been seized in recent days with eye-catching reports of a possible provincial secession or coup against President Kabila in Katanga province. What seems actually to be happening in Katanga is the President cleaning house in "his" province. The result so far has been that a couple of hundred people -- both military and civilian -- have been arrested as provincial networks belonging to Air Force Commander General John Numbi are broken up. These moves likely will improve security in the province in the short-term, although as we come closer to elections the risk of politically motivated violence in the province, particularly between the UDPS and PPRD, will again increase. The need to prevent or contain pre-electoral and electoral violence has prompted Monuc to request additional troops, to be stationed in Katanga and the neighboring Kasai provinces, as the current troop levels are sufficient only to sustain operations in the Kivus and Ituri district. End Summary.

Katanga -- Hotbed of Problems...

2. (C) Katanga is widely considered to be President Kabila's strong base in the DRC. His mother and sister live there, and he frequently visits, keeping in touch with local politicians and businessmen. His circle of closest advisors is composed largely of Katangans, who bring with them (in addition to varying degrees of loyalty to the President himself) the same divisions which characterize the province itself. Specifically, the north-south divide of Katanga province is epitomized by the rivalry between senior Presidential Advisor Augustin Katumba (a southerner) and Air Force Commander General John Numbi (a northerner). Historically the province also has suffered ethnically-based violence between Katangans and Kasaians resident in Katanga, and a persistent separatist current which dates back to independence. Of these factors, the ethnic issue is potentially the most explosive, particularly in the run-up to elections, but the internal PPRD dynamic is the most difficult to balance.

... and Intrigue

3. (C) Tensions have been rising in Katanga for the last several months, partly as a result of Numbi's activities, which include inciting new violence against the Kasaians. (Numbi was implicated in the previous killing of Kasaians when the "real Katangans" tried to purge their province of outsiders.) Numbi built a series of networks in southern Katanga, based in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi (a mining town), penetrating the Presidential Guard (GSSP), regular military, the intelligence services (particularly the ANR), Gecamines (the mining company for which Numbi's father worked), several NGOs and parts of the political structure. Elements of the latter two have been associated with recent separatist tracts. Numbi also is known to have connections to certain Mai Mai elements in northern Katanga who have been among the most troublesome in terms of provincial security.

4. (C) About three weeks ago, and apparently in response to indications that Numbi was preparing some sort of "action" in Katanga, President Kabila apparently decided to preemptively strike as many of Numbi's networks as possible. The first step was to bring quietly into the country some of the Congolese soldiers (mostly former Tigers and their descendants) who had been residing in neighboring Zambia. These troops moved quickly into the northern part of the province and began military action against some of the Mai Mai there, with the result being reportedly several hundred Mai Mai casualties and the forced dispersal of some of the most intransigent elements who had been located near important mining sites (some of which belong to friends of Augustin Katumba, the President's advisor). On May 4 National Security Advisor Samba Kaputo, a Presidential loyalist of Katumba's camp, was dispatched to Lubumbashi where he reportedly foiled an attempt by the GSSP to take over the city's airport. In the ensuing days, according to the Vice Governor of the province, a PPRD member and Kabila loyalist, Kaputo also seized several arms caches, arrested over 30 regular military officers and the head of the local civilian intelligence office (a known Numbi crony), and several civil servants and politicians in Lubumbashi, Kolwezi and Likasi, totalling about 200 individuals. The military

cleanup is expected to continue and expand, according to Defense Minister Adolphe Onusumba, who was dispatched to Lubumbashi by the President May 8 to assist Kaputo.

Oil On Troubled Waters

15. (C) President Kabila himself went to Lubumbashi May 9, probably to deal directly with the involvement in the intrigue of former provincial governor Katebe Katoto, whose younger brother, Moise Katumbi, is a friend of Augustin Katumba and of the President himself. In the murky waters of Katanga politics, Katoto's connection to the fracas appears to lie in his financial -- and political -- support for "Solidarite Katangese," a local NGO whose director is one of those arrested in the recent sweep. (Note: "Solidarite Katangese" sprang from the roots of an older organization, "Katangese Pour La Solderite," which had been involved in the massacre of Kasaians. As such, it is regarded as loosely belonging to Numbi's sphere of influence as well. End Note.) Kabila had already met twice with Katoto, once in Kinshasa and once in Lubumbashi, to try to moderate his anti-Kasaian behavior and rhetoric, but Katoto is a hard man with whom to negotiate, given that his objective is to be elected governor -- an ambition that Kabila does not support. Kabila would prefer to avoid arresting either Katoto or Numbi, since doing so likely would cause the current situation to escalate just when it appears on the point of being resolved. Instead, Numbi has been forced to remain in Lubumbashi, powerless to protect or assist those who had been working for him, and likely Katoto's punishment will be much the same.

Comment

16. (C) Although the press has been seized with the separatist angle to the story, the Katanga developments have virtually nothing to do with separatism and everything to do with a power play by Numbi, who is disgruntled at not being named commander of the army in the wake of a financial scandal involving current army chief General Kisempia. Given Numbi's temperament -- and temper -- it is quite likely that he was planning some sort of violent action in response to the President's military move against Mai Mai elements that Numbi controls. Although this incident is, therefore, something of an internal house-cleaning, there remains a very real risk that as we move into the pre-electoral and electoral period there will be renewed violence between Kasaians and Katangans. It is in an effort to contain or prevent such violence that Monuc is requesting additional troops to be stationed in Katanga and the two Kasai provinces, which currently have no Monuc military presence. Monuc's current deployment is focused on keeping peace and dealing with security threats in both Kivus and Ituri district, where promising improvements already are underway.

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